United Nations E/CN.18/2004/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 January 2004

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Fourth session
Geneva, 3-14 May 2004
Item 5 (e) of the provisional agenda*

Report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting

Summary

The Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring Assessment and Reporting of the United Nations Forum on Forests met from 8 to 12 December 2003 in Geneva. It was attended by 21 nominated experts as well as representatives of Member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other international organizations and major group entities. The Ad Hoc Expert Group addressed the following tasks: (a) assessing existing reporting requirements as well as monitoring and assessment procedures under relevant international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests; (b) proposing ways for the Forum to monitor and assess progress; (c) proposing an outline for voluntary reporting to the Forum; (d) recommending options for drawing upon the reports provided to Forum sessions to identify trends and lessons learned; and (e) developing recommendations on how to build capacity in countries for monitoring, assessment and reporting. The present report, which contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Expert Group, is presented to the fourth session of the Forum, for its consideration and appropriate action.

* E/CN.18/2004/1.

04-22381 (E) 170204

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I. Background

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35, by which it established the United Nations Forum on Forests, decided that the Forum may recommend, as appropriate, the convening of ad hoc expert groups of limited duration, involving experts from developed and developing countries, for scientific and technical advice.

2. At its first session, the Forum adopted its multi-year programme of work,[1] in which it recommended the convening of three ad hoc expert groups, one of which would be on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

3. At its third session, held in Geneva from 26 May to 6 June 2003, the Forum agreed on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting and to the convening of a meeting of the expert group. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2003/299, in which it decided that the ad hoc expert groups on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting and on finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies would be convened in Geneva from 8 to 19 December 2003.

II. Organizational and other matters

A. Venue and duration of the meeting

4. The Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting met at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 8 to 12 December 2003.

B. Tasks of the Ad Hoc Expert Group

5. As decided by the Forum at its third session,[2] the tasks of the Ad Hoc Expert Group were to:

(a) Assess existing reporting requirements under relevant international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations;

(b) Assess existing monitoring and assessment procedures in international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests;

(c) Propose ways for the Forum to monitor and assess progress, based on: (i) voluntary reporting by countries; (ii) members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organizations and international and regional processes on implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action; (iii) ongoing work on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management being undertaken at the national, regional and international levels; and (iv) existing data and information as well as reporting systems and structures;

(d) Propose an outline for voluntary reporting to the Forum;

(e) Recommend options for drawing upon the reports provided to Forum sessions to identify trends and lessons learned;

(f) Develop recommendations on how to build capacity in countries, including the increase of resources for that goal, for monitoring, assessment and reporting, taking into account the special needs of developing countries.

C. Attendance and participation

6. The United Nations Forum on Forests agreed that the Ad Hoc Expert Group would be composed of 30 experts (six from each of the five United Nations regional groups and including representatives of developed and developing countries and countries with economies in transition). As was further agreed by the Forum, representatives of member States of the Forum participated in the first two days of the meeting and remained as observers for the last three days. Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests participated in a resource capacity and were invited to make scientific and technical contributions.

7. Other intergovernmental organizations and representatives of major groups, with relevant expertise, participated in the meeting, in accordance with the rules and procedures of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the practices established by the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). They were invited to make scientific and technical contributions.

8. A full list of participants can be found in annex I to the present report.

D. Election of officers

9. The experts elected Benedicto Fonseca Filho (Brazil) as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Expert Group.

10. The experts decided to form a drafting group, consisting of one expert from each regional group, to assist the Chairman in drafting the report of the Group for the consideration of all the experts. The Chairman of the Group invited Mr. Dudley to act as facilitator of the drafting group. The members of the drafting group included Michael Dudley (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Alfonso Garcia Escobar (Mexico), Natalia Malysheva (Russian Federation), Nasr Ragheb Said (Egypt), Wandojo Siswanto (Indonesia) and Ewald Rametsteiner (Austria).

E. Documentation

11. The provisional agenda, with annotations, and a note by the Secretariat containing a concept paper were prepared for the meeting. Several background documents were also made available to the experts. A list of documents can be found in annex II to the present report.

F. Conduct of the meeting

Opening of the meeting

12. Mr. Pekka Patosaari, coordinator and head of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, opened the meeting on the morning of 8 December 2003 by welcoming all experts and observers from Member States, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and major groups. In his opening remarks, he provided an overview of the United Nations Forum on Forests process and the establishment of the Forum's ad hoc expert groups. In addition, he stressed the importance, for the work of the Forum, of monitoring implementation, assessing outputs and impacts and reporting on progress, experiences and lessons learned. He also highlighted the expectations of the international community that the Ad Hoc Expert Group would effectively and efficiently tackle its tasks and provide concrete and practical recommendations to the Forum.

Discussions of the Ad Hoc Expert Group

13. During the first two days of the meeting, participants had a general exchange of views related to the tasks of the Ad Hoc Expert Group. During the third and fourth days, the members of the Group elaborated in more detail their views related to the mandate of the Group, based on the outcomes of their initial discussions on the first two days. This enabled the drafting group to put forward a draft report on the morning of the fifth and last day of the meeting, which reflected the productive and wide ranging discussions of the Ad Hoc Expert Group. The report was adopted by the Ad Hoc Expert Group.

Closure of the meeting

14. Mr. Pekka Patosaari said a few words to congratulate the Ad Hoc Expert Group for the valuable output of its meeting. The Chairman, Benedicto Fonseca Filho, closed the meeting, thanking the experts for their excellent work over the course of the week.

III. Conclusions and matters for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

A. Introduction

15. For the purposes of its work, the Ad Hoc Expert Group referred to the descriptions provided in the report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting, including concepts, terminology and definitions (E/CN.18/2002/8):

(a) Monitoring involves periodic quantitative or qualitative measurements or observations of a specific parameter;

(b) Assessment involves analysis of the monitored data and observations;

(c) Reporting involves dissemination of the results of assessments.

16. The Ad Hoc Expert Group recalled the decision of the Forum that defined the Forum's monitoring, assessment and reporting function as consisting of three areas:

(a) Progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action;

(b) Progress towards sustainable forest management (measuring conditions and trends on the ecological, social and economic aspects of forests);

(c) Review of the effectiveness.

17. The Ad Hoc Expert Group focused on the first two areas of the monitoring, assessment and reporting function, recognizing the link between its work and the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests that will take place at the Forum's fifth session. One of the 21 criteria for the review of the effectiveness is the extent to which countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other actors have made progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action.

18. The Ad Hoc Expert Group noted that its work would also contribute to the deliberations at the Fourth session of the Forum on implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action on the two agenda items on: (a) monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts terminology and definitions; and (b) criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. It further noted that a number of the IPF/IFF proposals for action address monitoring, assessment and reporting at the national level.

19. The Ad Hoc Expert Group focused its conclusions and recommendations on how the United Nations Forum on Forests would assess and monitor progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action and progress towards sustainable forest management (using criteria and indicators) and how reporting from countries, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other relevant international and regional organizations and processes and major groups could contribute to this. It recognized that the primary value of monitoring and assessment activities is at the national level.

20. The Ad Hoc Expert Group acknowledged the many potential benefits to countries from reporting for national and international purposes recognized by the United Nations Forum on Forests at its second session. It agreed on the following principles to guide its work in order to help capture these benefits:

(a) Build on existing monitoring, assessment and reporting practices;

(b) Make optimal use of both existing and collected information for monitoring and assessment purposes so as to limit the need for additional reporting;

(c) Strengthen links between national and international reporting so as to reduce the reporting burden;

(d) Design mechanisms for monitoring and assessment and procedures for reporting that take into consideration the varying levels of country capacities.

B. Conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Expert Group

21. The Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting transmits to the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its

fourth session, for its consideration and appropriate action, the following conclusions and recommendations covering its tasks as envisaged in Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/299.

1. Existing reporting requirements as well as monitoring and assessment procedures under relevant international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests

Conclusions

22. The Ad Hoc Expert Group welcomed the note by the Secretariat on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting under relevant international instruments, organizations and processes (E/CN.18/AC.1/2003/2).

23. In particular, the Group noted some of the key findings related to forest-related monitoring and assessment, including:

(a) Most international forest-related monitoring and assessment is based on national reporting, supplemented by other sources of information;

(b) Many international and regional organizations, instruments and processes use national and, in some cases, regional and international indicators for monitoring and assessment purposes. At the same time, many forest-related instruments are developing and are encouraging countries to apply indicators to monitor progress in implementation, as well as impacts on the ground;

(c) The United Nations Forum on Forests and many other governing bodies of members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have recognized the usefulness of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management for monitoring and assessment purposes;

(d) The periodicity of assessments varies by process, the most common being every four to six years;

(e) The scope of assessments also varies by process, from a narrow focus to more comprehensive coverage.

24. The Ad Hoc Expert Group also noted some key findings related to reporting to forest-related instruments and organizations, including:

(a) There are numerous and extensive requests for national reports related to forests by international and regional organizations, instruments and processes, which represent a burden on countries;

(b) Countries do not always provide consistent guidance on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the various international forest-related bodies;

(c) The forest-related information reported to these instruments and organizations falls into two broad categories: actions taken to implement international commitments; and situations and trends in ecological, social and economic aspects of forests;

(d) There are overlaps in the information requested, which provide the potential to streamline reporting and reduce the burden on countries;

(e) The purpose, scope, timing and periodicity of reporting vary by instrument/organization, and differences in terminology and definitions, among other things, pose challenges for streamlining.

25. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests reported on progress in its work to identify overlaps in and opportunities for streamlining forest-related national reporting. The Group expressed appreciation to the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the work they have initiated and their efforts to keep countries and other stakeholders informed about these activities at the sessions of the Forum and at other forest-related meetings.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

26. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Call for greater efforts on the part of international organizations and instruments to identify areas of overlap and redundancy in reporting and inconsistencies in information reported;**

(b) **Encourage the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue to make information from national reports to international instruments and organizations readily accessible for monitoring, assessment and reporting purposes, including through the development of a common information framework for forest-related reporting to international instruments;**

(c) **Encourage the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to explain the benefits of their work on streamlining forest-related reporting and to further publicize it through all possible means, including to their governing bodies. This could include the possible reduction of overall costs resulting from their work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting;**

(d) **Encourage the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to develop a schedule of required forest-related reporting and request the secretariat of the Forum to make this information available to all member States of the Forum, in order to allow for better time management in countries in the collection of information, consultations with stakeholders and effective compilation and analysis of reports;**

(e) **Further encourage the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue their efforts to harmonize forest-related definitions, in order to minimize inconsistencies in information, with the aim of reducing the reporting burden;**

(f) **Call for increased coordination within countries among national focal points for forest-related instruments;**

(g) **Invite the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to communicate the need for their respective focal points to enhance in-country coordination.**

2. Ways for the United Nations Forum on Forests to monitor and assess progress

27. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group considered ways that the Forum could monitor and assess progress both towards sustainable forest management and in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, taking into account the seven thematic areas identified by the participants in the International Conference on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, held from 3 to 7 February 2003 in Guatemala City, and the 16 elements of the United Nations Forum on Forests.**

Monitoring and assessment of progress towards sustainable forest management

Conclusions

28. The Group recognized that a great deal of information has already been reported and continues to be reported by countries to international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests. These sources of information could be used as a basis for assessing the progress made towards sustainable forest management.

29. An important source of information is the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) which will be updated in 2005, using criteria for sustainable forest management as its organizing framework. The Group recognized other sources of information, including reports on country progress in the use of criteria and indicators, assessment reports of criteria and indicators processes (for example, of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, of the International Tropical Timber Organization and the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, known as the Montreal Process) as well as reports from other global and regional assessments. Valuable information is also available from the forest industry and other stakeholders, and efforts need to be made to capture such information.

30. The Ad Hoc Expert Group concluded that these and other existing sources of information could be used to monitor and assess progress towards sustainable forest management. Thus, national reporting to the Forum would not be necessary.

31. The Ad Hoc Expert Group welcomed the inclusion of the item on criteria and indicators on the agenda of the fourth session of the Forum, which enables criteria and indicator processes to report on their development and progress in the national use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

32. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Invite FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, criteria and indicators processes and other relevant organizations and instruments to cooperate in preparing a document providing a global overview of progress towards sustainable forest management for the consideration of the Forum at its fifth session;**

(b) **Agree at its fourth session, on the nature of the global overview;**

(c) Recommend that such a global overview should include broader non-quantifiable developments, such as the widespread acceptance of the need for sustainable forest management and various initiatives towards achieving it;

(d) Encourage countries that do not belong to a criteria and indicator process to become involved;

(e) Further recommend that the global Forest Resources Assessment of FAO, and those criteria and indicators processes that are ready to report, be invited to present their assessments at the fifth session of the Forum;

(f) Recommend that an appropriate periodicity for subsequent assessments of progress towards sustainable forest management would be approximately every five years;

(g) Recommend that countries support the enhancement of the global Forest Resources Assessment and regional and international criteria and indicators processes in order to improve the information base available for subsequent assessments of sustainable forest management.

Monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

Conclusions

33. The Ad Hoc Expert Group took note that an assessment of progress in implementation of most of the IPF/IFF proposals for action will have been accomplished by the fourth session of the Forum. Past sessions have addressed those proposals for action related to the "Forum elements" on their agenda. An overall assessment of progress in implementation is due to occur at the fifth session of the Forum as part of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

34. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests could:**

(a) Agree to continue monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action according to established practices until the fifth session of the Forum;

(b) Recommend that greater links be made between international reporting requirements and domestic reports on sustainable forest management;

(c) Recommend that, after 2005, countries could use their national forest programmes or equivalents as one method to demonstrate progress in implementation to the international community;

(d) Call for each country, as part of its national forest programme process, to continue to prioritize its implementation of action so as to accelerate progress towards sustainable forest management, taking into account the IPF/IFF proposals for action;

(c) **Recognizing the difficulties many countries have in reporting, invite FAO regional forestry commissions and FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests that have regional offices to facilitate the assessment of the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action and the flow of information between the Forum and countries.**

3. Outline for voluntary reporting to the Forum

35. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group addressed issues related to gathering information for the fifth session of the Forum, in view of the fact that reporting for the fourth session is already under way. The Group also discussed in more general terms the nature of reporting in the long term, beyond 2005.**

Reporting to the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Conclusions

36. The Ad Hoc Expert Group recognized that the overall assessment of progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action would be part of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests that will take place at the fifth session of the Forum. It noted that, at its second session, the Forum identified 21 criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, some of which are related to progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.[3]

37. The Ad Hoc Expert Group took note of the gaps in country reporting on implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action reported to the Forum, and considered two ways that this information could be gathered in order to get as comprehensive a view as possible of country implementation for the fifth session:

(a) The Forum secretariat would develop a simple questionnaire, which could include both "tick boxes" for quantitative information as well as space for descriptive information related to implementation. Information would be provided to the Forum secretariat through submission of written responses to the questionnaire. A draft outline, which was briefly considered by the Ad Hoc Expert Group, is attached to the present report as an example (see annex III);

(b) The secretariat, assisted by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests would collect information through telephone interviews or personal visits, using a simple format.

The two approaches were not seen as being mutually exclusive.

38. The Ad Hoc Expert Group also recognized that the meetings of the FAO regional forestry commissions in 2004 could provide an opportunity for countries to discuss implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

39. The Ad Hoc Expert Group also noted that members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests through the Partnership's Framework, and major groups, both through written reports and the multi-stakeholder dialogues, have reported to the second and third sessions of the Forum and are planning to do so at the fourth session.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

40. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and major groups to provide comprehensive reporting related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action for the fifth session of the Forum;**

(b) **Invite the FAO regional forestry commissions to take the opportunity to hold discussions on the relationship between regional priorities and the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action in order to contribute to the overall assessment at the fifth session of the Forum;**

(c) **Request countries that have not already done so to identify a national focal point for the Forum and submit contact information to the Forum secretariat by 1 July 2004, in order to facilitate the reporting process leading up to the fifth session;**

(d) **Recommend that the Forum secretariat use, where practicable, the two ways discussed by the Ad Hoc Expert Group to gather information in order to obtain the best possible picture of implementation.**

Reporting over the long term

Conclusions

41. The Ad Hoc Expert Group agreed that their recommendations regarding future reporting mechanisms should be of a general nature, as the future institutional framework for the Forum would be considered at its fifth session. These mechanisms should facilitate the identification of emerging issues as well as issues that no longer merit the attention of the Forum.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

42. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Recommend that there be greater coherence and linkage between reports generated for domestic purposes and international reporting, using, where possible, reports generated domestically on implementation of national forest programmes or their equivalent, reflecting the implementation of international commitments;**

(b) **Agree to continue the consistent use of a flexible format for reporting, which allows for the identification of issues that warrant the attention of the international community;**

(c) **Agree that the sessions of the Forum will provide opportunities for countries, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and major groups to identify emerging issues that warrant the attention of the international community.**

4. How to draw upon the reports provided to the sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests to identify trends and lessons learned

Conclusions

43. The Ad Hoc Expert Group discussed the important role of the Forum in identifying global trends and providing opportunities for countries, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and major groups to share experiences and lessons learned regarding the implementation of sustainable forest management and the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Experts recognized that the sharing of these lessons and the highlighting of trends through written reports was further enriched through active exchange of information at the sessions of the Forum and at country-led initiatives and other intersessional activities. The Group therefore welcomed the innovations introduced at the third session of the Forum, which had facilitated the sharing of experiences and lessons learned, including panel discussions and presentations of experiences at the national and regional levels. The Group also recognized the important role played by side events to the sessions of the Forum in facilitating the interactive exchange of information on both technical and policy issues.

Recommendations for the considerations of the United Nations Forum on Forests

44. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Agree that sessions of the Forum, in addition to devoting time to country reporting, will further enhance the provision of opportunities to share experiences and lessons learned, including through presentation of experiences at national and regional levels, panel discussions and side events;**

(b) **Urge the Forum secretariat to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the holding of side events, including through suggesting partners among developed countries with similar interests;**

(c) **Recommend that the reports of Forum sessions seek to capture the lessons learned, trends and emerging issues highlighted during the session, and that the Forum secretariat document such information from both the official deliberations and the side events and make it available on the Forum's web site;**

(d) **Recommend that major groups, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and institutions be called upon at the sessions of the Forum to share their experiences and lessons learned as well as to highlight issues, with a view to contributing to the identification of action that the Forum can take.**

5. How to build capacity in countries

Conclusions

45. The Ad Hoc Expert Group noted that country-led initiatives held in support of the Forum's work on monitoring, assessment and reporting and other related meetings, such as those that took place in Yokohama, Japan, Guatemala City and

Viterbo, Italy, as referred to in annex II of the present report, have produced several recommendations on capacity-building that warrant the consideration of the Forum.

46. The monitoring, assessment and reporting obligations of forest-related organizations, instruments and processes have become increasingly technical and complex. In addition, some organizations, instruments and processes requesting information are not always aware of the challenges these demands create for countries with limited capacities.

47. In many cases, it is not so much a question of an absence or lack of scientific and technical knowledge in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, but rather that there is a lack of resources to implement effective monitoring, assessment and reporting in these countries. Focal points also need to be motivated to engage effectively in monitoring, assessment and reporting processes. Furthermore, there is often a lack of communication between the people tasked with responding to reporting requests and those authorities, institutions and personnel that provide the necessary information. Increased participation of the parties producing national reports at international meetings might improve their motivation and understanding of the process and promote better overall communication.

48. Increased resources (human, financial and technical), increased efficiency and a strong commitment to capacity-building, both nationally and internationally, are therefore needed for all aspects of monitoring, assessment and reporting. Increasing the capacity of those participating in global forest-related assessments would enhance the value of such assessments.

49. Monitoring, assessment and reporting have to be reflected in national development action plans, poverty reduction strategies and national forest programmes in order to attract international cooperation for capacity-building. Resources allocated to monitoring, assessment and reporting are more likely to increase when the usefulness of this information is reflected in actions on the ground and become apparent to decision makers.

50. Learning by engaging in monitoring, assessment and reporting processes was identified as one way to strengthen capacity. The criteria and indicator processes were mentioned as an example, since they both provide countries with the opportunity to share experiences and with assistance in gathering information. Various activities by the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other intergovernmental organizations, such as FAO, the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Tropical Timber Organization, to strengthen capacity for their particular reporting processes were also mentioned.

Recommendations for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests

51. **The Ad Hoc Expert Group recommends that the United Nations Forum on Forests:**

(a) **Invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other international organizations, regional institutions and processes and multilateral and bilateral partners to continue to support actions to strengthen national capacity and capability for the various elements of monitoring, assessment and reporting on the implementation of sustainable forest management and IPF/IFF proposals for action through the provision of financial resources,**

technical assistance and transfer of appropriate technology and know-how to developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

(b) **Suggest that countries make better use of existing resources and also seek additional domestic and external resources to strengthen capacity to monitor, assess and report on the implementation of sustainable forest management and IPF/IFF proposals for action;**

(c) **Invite regional and subregional organizations, processes and networks, including the FAO regional forestry commissions, to discuss common problems and share experiences and expertise regarding capacity-building for monitoring, assessment and reporting on implementation of sustainable forest management and IPF/IFF proposals for action;**

(d) **Recommend that countries take the opportunity, at the fourth session of the Forum, to exchange experiences in monitoring, assessment and reporting related to various forest-related instruments, highlight the benefits and value of such reporting and identify specific needs for national capacity-building;**

(e) **Invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to organize joint regional workshops of national focal points to build capacity for forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting;**

(f) **Invite the Global Environment Facility, within its mandate, to provide funds to strengthen national capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition for forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting as a component of its projects in biological diversity, climate change and land degradation;**

(g) **Invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other international and regional organizations, instruments and processes to support capacity strengthening of those criteria and indicator processes that are at the early stages of maturity and encourage criteria and indicator processes to exchange their experiences in capacity-building efforts.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 22* (E/2001/42/Rev.1), Part two, chap. I.B.

[2] Ibid., *2003, Supplement No. 22* (E/2003/42), chap. I.B, draft decision III, annex.

[3] Ibid., *2002, Supplement No. 22* (E/2002/42), chap. I.B, resolution 2/3, para. 4 (a) (i)-(iv).

Annex I

List of participants

Experts

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Other intergovernmental organizations, processes and convention secretariats

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Major group entities

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Annex II

List of documents

Documents

Provisional agenda and annotations (E/CN.18/AC.1/2003/1)

Note by the Secretariat on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting (E/CN.18/AC.1/2003/2)

Background documents

Report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting, including concepts, terminology and definitions (E/CN.18/2002/8)

Report of the country-led initiative, "International expert meeting on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress toward sustainable forest management", Yokohama, Japan, November 2001

Report of the country-led initiative on "Lessons Learned in Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on Implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action", Viterbo, Italy, March 2003 (see E/CN.18/2003/9, annex)

Report of the International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management: The Way Forward, Guatemala City, 3-7 February 2003:

- Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management: overview of progress and issues, by Markku Simula
- Strengthening institutional capacity and stakeholder partnerships for implementing criteria and indicators and facilitating the exchange of information between all stakeholders, by Ravi Prabhu et al.
- Key issues in the future development of international initiatives on forest-related criteria and indicators related to sustainable development, by Ewald Rametsteiner and Don Wijewardana

A format for voluntary reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests at its third session (E/CN.18/2003/4)

Towards a common information framework for forest-related national reporting to international processes. CPF task force on streamlining forest-related reporting, interim report, 6 December 2003

Annex III

Optional draft outline for reporting on the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

Purpose: To give the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests a basis for making decisions on future proposals for action (e.g. no future proposals, keep the existing proposals, abandon the existing and adopting new proposals)

One simple questionnaire to all member States of the United Nations Forum on Forests and another to international organizations, conventions and processes concerned. Descriptive written or oral reports on specified issues of selected countries in all of the five regions

Questionnaire

The countries/international bodies are requested to fill in the questionnaire below.

UNFF elements/ thematic clusters/ proposals for action	Relevant to the country/ international body		Action(s) since 19xx (move down to an additional side column)					
			No action taken. Reasons?			Action(s) taken. Progress?		
	Yes	No	Not needed	Not a priority	Other reasons	None/ little	Some/ moderate	Significant

A detailed instruction must accompany the questionnaires. For example what is meant by "Not needed" and "Not a priority"?

The questionnaires should not take long to fill in. The target for the overall response rate of the country questionnaire would be 70 per cent, as a minimum, and not less than 60 per cent in any of the regions. In order to achieve this target, the secretariat must make great and repeated efforts using different means. The target response rate for the international body questionnaire must be 100 per cent.